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INDIANA COLLECTION

Hobart - History



Hobart Sesquicentennial 1847 - 1997



A Compendium of Early History
And Remembrances of the Past Fifty Years

Issued in Celebration of the
Sesquicentennial
of the Founding of
Hobart, Indiana

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Marion Dudley, Editor



The gristmill constructed by Hobart founder George Earle at the dam he built across Deep River. (Present site of the NBD bank building.)

Hobart, which Earle named in honor of his brother, began as a business venture and quickly grew to a busy trading center and then a prosperous town.

This sketch of the historic mill, which characterized Hobart and was the town's centerpiece until it was destroyed by fire in 1953, was done by Dale Fleming.

Fleming, who lives in the Indiana dunes area, studied at the American Academy of Arts in Chicago. He has done sketches of several historic locations in Hobart. They are available at the Hobart Historical Society Museum.

An Invitation to Commemorate and Celebrate Hobart's Sesquicentennial from Linda M. Buzinec Mayor of Hobart



What a wonderful time for the City of Hobart — our Sesquicentennial celebration. One hundred and fifty years as a community is certainly a reason to celebrate especially when you reflect on all that has happened to Hobart during that time span.

From our pioneer beginnings as a site for George Earle's gristmill to a thriving city that is home to almost 25,000 citizens, Hobart has definitely had 150 years of fanfare. Yet despite the changes in our community Hobart remains as charming and enticing now as it was to those early settlers.

In 1997 Lake George is still the heart of Hobart like it was in 1847. Although the bricks and brickyards are long gone, the quality of life remains "solid as a brick" here in Hobart. My own grandparents lived in Hobart for almost 100 years. I am sure if they were alive today they could attest to Hobart's appeal as a place to raise a family both then and now.

Whether you are a new or long time resident of our city, take time to participate in Hobart's Happy 150th Birthday this year. Join us at the many events that will be hosted to commemorate our Sesquicentennial. Relax and read this booklet that narrates our past and appreciate the history that is ours.

As we approach the dawn of a new century, make a wish for another 150 years as special as the last for this unique place we call home — Hobart.



HOBART — NOW AND THEN

by Ann Schmelter

When I graduated from the Crown Point School systems in 1933, I attended a graduation party given by a close friend, Marie Schmelter. It was a large family and many cousins were invited including Leonard who was destined to become my husband. He was the oldest of nine children belonging to the Joseph Schmelters, who made their home on a farm on 49th Ave., across from St. Sava's.

We were married in 1936 at St. Mary's Church in Crown Point. Because it was too far to commute from Crown Point to Gary Steel Mills where Leonard was employed, we moved to Gary. We lived in rental apartments until Leonard's wonderful grandmother, Anna Wehner offered to sell her home to us if we were interested. She wanted to keep this home in the family if possible. Boy, were we interested — a home of our own! We moved into this large, lovely home with our four children, Janet, Carol, Charles and Linda.



The Ho-Hive was established in 1945 in this house on the southwest corner of Fourth and Main Streets. It was a busy center of teenage activity and entertainment and community meetings until it was razed to make way for the building of the City Hall in 1966.

What a grand location. Only two blocks from everything — shopping center, churches, schools and the wonderful Brickie Bowl. When the band struck up on Friday nights for football games, it might as well have been in our own front yard. We witnessed the fire that totalled Hobart Lumber Company between 5th & 6th Streets.

A building at the corner of 4th and Main was a gathering place for teenagers. It was called the "Ho-Hive." A Kroger grocery store was in the middle of the block between 3rd & 4th Streets. An A & P grocery was located across from Lake George on 3rd Street. Baumer's bakery on the corner now features a jewelry repair shop across from City Hall. Schultz Brothers dime store is now a Dollar General. A new St. Bridget Church was built on Center Street where services were previously held on the second floor of the school on Main Street.

The development of Villa Shores, just west of Lake George, brought many lovely homes to the area. That along with the Lou Kuchta Bridge and the lovely Revelli Bandshell made a wonderful addition to Hobart.

Now with the completion of the Lake George Project, Hobart residents can be justly proud of their beautiful city. Businesses have left the area only to be replaced by others. I cannot recall all of them and I must associate myself with the adage — Been there, done that, can't remember.



AS IT WAS

Part prairie, part forest, part marsh, crowned by a ridge carved by a glacier, and the home of the Potawatomi ... the land on which Hobart was founded.

Native Americans lived comfortably in this bountiful place. According to "A Short History of Hobart," authored by the late Hobart historian, Mariam Pleak, "Pine and cedar covered the area ... black and white walnut, hickory, hazel and beechnut trees were plentiful ... huckleberries, cranberries, red and yellow cherries, strawberries and grapes grew in abundance."

Rivers, streams and lakes were filled with pike, bass and sunfish. There was much wild fowl and game. Beaver, otter, mink and other furbearing animals attracted French furtraders following discovery of the area by the Jesuit, Father Jacques Marquette, and Louis Joliet in 1674.

From that time until the signing of the Treaty of Paris in 1763, the region was claimed by the French. It was held by the British for the following 20 years.

The United States Congress defined the Indiana Territory in 1800. It included what is now Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin and parts of Michigan and Minnesota.

The well-watered, rich Indiana soil attracted settlers and, following the end of the War of 1812, population increased quickly. On December 11, 1816, Indiana became the 19th state.

Much of the land in Lake County was procured by treaty with the Potawatomi. Some Potawatomi chiefs retained areas which they sold to settlers for \$1.25 an acre.

Hobart's Early History

The first to settle in what would be Hobart came by covered wagon in 1836. They were Samuel and Ann Sigler, Elmira and William Hurst and Joseph and Melvina Mundell.

About the same time, George Earle, a native of Falmouth, England, and a builder and developer in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, bought the town of Liverpool, Indiana and a great deal of the property around it. Nearly ten years later he built a dam across Deep River five miles upstream from Liverpool. There he built a sawmill in 1846 and then a gristmill.

Earle named the millsite area Hobart in honor of his brother. He moved his family to his

new town in 1847 and, because he had been the postmaster in Liverpool, he became Hobart's first postmaster.

The town of Hobart was platted and recorded in 1849 and the 1850 Federal Census reported the Hobart Township population to be 240 persons.

Hobart became Lake County's first railroad center. The town prospered and grew. It was a trading post for Native Americans, supplier to homesteaders, businesses and residents, and manufacturer and producer of various goods.

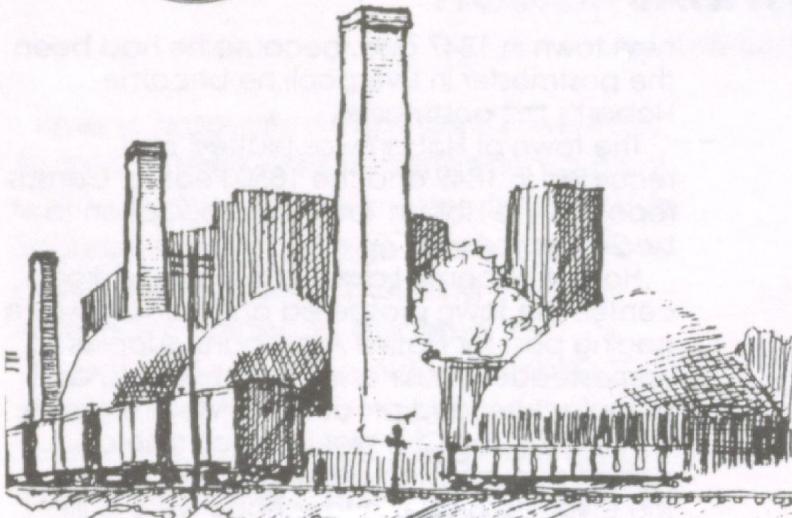
Following the Civil War in which nine of Hobart's young men gave their lives to save the Union, churches and schools were built and fraternal groups and cultural and patriotic societies organized. On March 3, 1889, the first issue of the Hobart Gazette was published.

By the beginning of the 20th Century, brick-making had become Hobart's major industry. The town had brick yards, lumber yards, sawmill and a foundry.

Hobart was smartly managed. It had a good water supply, an electric power facility and telephone office. Through the years the town continued to be characterized by the particular individualities of strong leaders and independent thinkers. As philosophies, attitudes and technologies were influenced by



Judy O'Bannon (left), wife of Indiana Governor Frank O'Bannon, and a small friend are shown examples of native and endangered plants by Keith Board, who discovered Hobart's Cressmoor Prairie.



Brick-making began in Hobart in the 1850's and forty years later it had grown to be a major industry with several brick yards. The last operating tile works, north of the railroad tracks at North Lake Park Avenue, was closed down in 1965.

Dale Fleming sketch

national and world conditions and situations, Hobart adapted and developed without losing its distinctive qualities, cherished and sustained in its churches and schools and cultural, social, civic and business organizations.

Everyone took part in the enthusiastic celebration of Hobart's Centennial. Men grew beards and they and women and children wore clothing in the style of the mid-1800's. The town's 100-year history was dramatized in a spectacular pageant staged in Brickie Bowl. More than 400 took part in the ambitious production, which was performed the evenings of July 3, 4, 5, 6, 1947.

The Hobart Centennial Association, Inc. published a "Souvenir Program and History, issued in Commemoration of the Centennial Anniversary." It documented Hobart's first century. It honored by name the young men who had given their lives in service to their country in the Civil War and World Wars I and II and all veterans of the Mexican, Civil and Spanish American Wars and of World Wars I and II.*

It was a carefree and optimistic time. World War II had ended, returning servicemen were marrying and beginning new families. There was a prosperity of spirit and of the economy.

*A copy of the "Program and History" is available for perusal at the Hobart Historical Society Museum.

1947-1957

New home construction provided for the growing population. Polio was a continuing warm weather threat; milk was delivered to homes in glass bottles; Loretta Young films were being shown at the Art Theatre; and greeting cards required two cents postage.

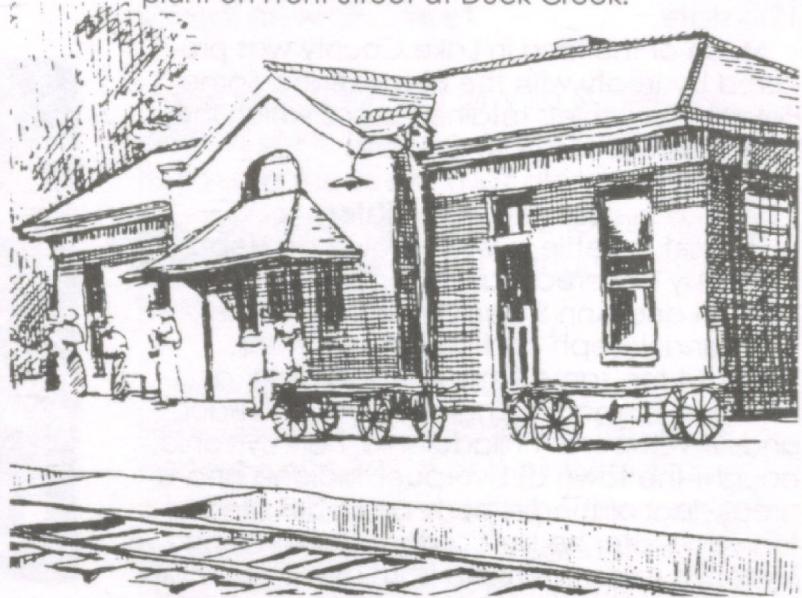
The nationally famous Hobart High School band continued to win honors in competitions and on tours and hundreds of cakes were donated for Band Mother's Cake Walks in front of the post office.

Harold E. Thompson set a new helicopter speed record in a Sikorsky S-52 plane; school closings were threatened by a coal shortage; there were outboard motor boat races on the lake; there was a shortage of doctors and Mellon Insurance offered a policy to pay for treatment of "Lockjaw, Sleeping Sickness, Scarlet Fever and Small Pox."

The 1948 Berlin Airlift had been successful, but a "Pattern for Survival" in the event of an atomic attack was published by the city's Civilian Defense organization.

The U.S. Postal Service limited mail delivery to once a day in 1950. Hobart's branch had just been given First Class status with six city carriers and two rural routes.

Voters elected Fred Rose, Jr. to the first of two terms as mayor in 1951. The following year, the Common Council voted to build a sewage plant on Front Street at Duck Creek.



In 1858, George Earle gave land for a station and right-of-way for the Pittsburgh, Fort Wayne and Chicago Railway (later on, the Pennsylvania Railroad tracks). The restored depot building still standing on Lillian Street was built in 1912.

Dale Fleming sketch



Members of the Brickies Booster's club held "smokers" to support the winning high school football teams; the School Patrol boys and girls were given picnics; Hobart was designated part of a critical defense area and rent controls were restored.

February 19, 1953 was a sad, sad day. Hobart's historic mill, its precious landmark and symbol of its beginning, was completely destroyed by fire.

About this time, the city's water system was connected with the Gary/Hobart Water Company; the Lion's Club initiated rat-killing drives; there was active opposition to water fluoridation; the Izaak Walton League determined the lake not safe for swimming and choked with silt; Frey Dairy Queen gave free sundaes to dads on Father's Day; and the Chamber of Commerce moved into the Beach House on Front Street in 1956.

1957 - 1967

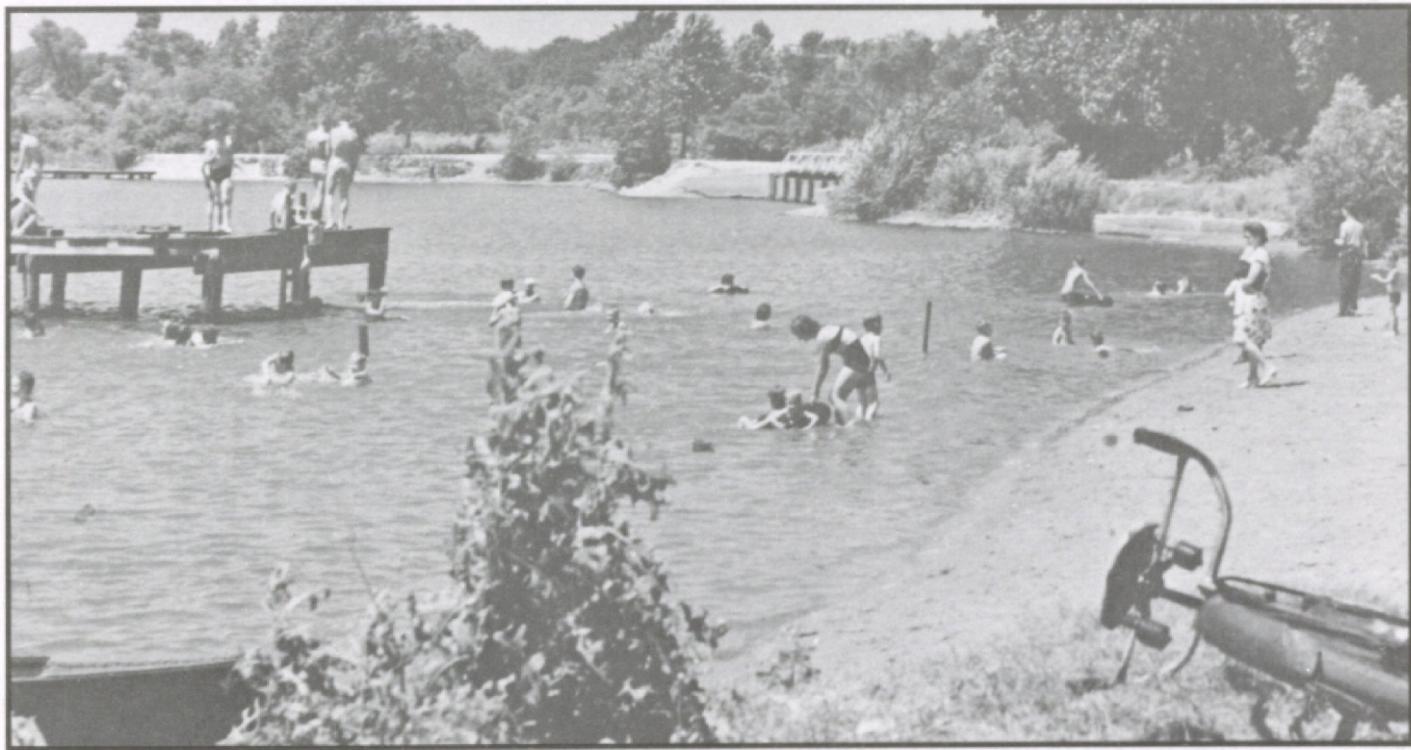
Much was to happen in the world and in Hobart in this decade. The first jet plane was put into passenger service and Hawaii and Alaska were given statehood.

A Nike base was built in Wheeler; the Bloodmobile made regular visits; a petition was circulated against the City's plans to buy the clay pit for a garbage dump; and Henry Ittel requested a permit to operate his own taxi.

The Brickie Harriers were the big news in 1957! Coach Red Kurth's Hobart High School cross country team won the State Championship ... and they would do it again in 1960. At Indiana University, "scrappy" Don Howell was assigned a guard position on the football team.

In 1958, Jim Johnston set a national pole vault record of 14 feet, four and one-half inches; the High School band continued to be practically perfect; and the Ho-Hive planned trips for teens to Riverview Park in Chicago.

The City Council was taking bids on the cost of spraying against Dutch elm disease and denied the Nickel Plate Railroad permission to dispense with the services of a watchman at the Main Street crossing. A Jewel store was built at 600 Main; the Pennsy RR raised the price of a ticket for 24 rides between Chicago and Hobart from \$17.05 to \$18.85; and, after 20



The millpond created by George Earle's dam became Lake George, Hobart's centerpiece. Once graced by a fine hotel, it gave townspeople and their guests much pleasure, picnicking, swimming, fishing and boating in summer, and ice skating in winter. Young penrods with their poles and pups and old anglers with rods and reminiscences found along its shores solitary, grassy places to fish and dream.



years at Fourth and Main, Waldo Liechty moved his hatchery to South Lake Park Avenue.

In October of 1959, Mayor Fred Rose, who had been nominated to run for a third term, died. Herman Pflughoef was selected to run in his place and took office January 1, 1960.

Hobart was experiencing growing pains. Ten adjoining areas were annexed in just three years and there were rezoning and service problems.

There were expressions of need of an industrial zone; General Telephone Company opened its new building to house dial technology; Blair Truitt bagged a trophy bear in Alaska; the Hobart High School band set a 30-year record for firsts; and a Lake George clean-up committee was organized.

Fred Rose Park was named as a memorial to the late mayor; Leon Gardner donated "disaster kits" to be kept at the ready; the Hobart Fire Department was the state waterball champ; and a group of Hobart women held a tea for Mrs. Henry Cabot Lodge.

At the end of 1960, Laura Bracken suffered a stroke. She had served her city for more than 30 years as Hobart city clerk.

"The Sixties" are memorable. John Glenn orbited the Earth; President John Kennedy



In winter in the 1960's, Pete Kellen (right foreground) dammed the stream behind his greenhouses on 10th Street (present site of Park Place) to create a safe skating pond for Hobart children. He provided hot chocolate for chilled skaters in the warming shack he built beside the pond.

Walter A. Keller photo

was assassinated; and nearly one-half million U.S. troops were in combat in South Vietnam.

In Hobart, bonds were issued for new sewers; the Doughboy statue was refurbished by the VFW; the Post Office was expanded; the swimming pool opened; and the Chamber of Commerce proposed closing Main Street from Third to Fourth and designing all store fronts to look alike.

Voters rejected the Lake Clean-up referendum four to one; the old Cressmoor club house burned; first class postage cost was raised to five cents and the Zip Code system was adopted; and John Johnson was drafted by the Chicago Bears.

Hobart High School enrollment passed the 1,000 mark; the YMCA revealed plans for its new building on Wisconsin Street; and in the fall of 1963, Lilburn J. Titus was elected to the first of what would be his three terms as Hobart's mayor.

The following year Heuring Motors introduced the Mustang; the spillway below the dam was repaired; the fallout shelter in the Post Office was stocked with emergency supplies; the Ancilla Domini Sisters announced the building of a hospital at 61st Street and Highway 51; and plans were made for a new city barn on the Hobart industrial site.

Ground was broken for a "City Hall that will be ageless" in 1966 and sites were selected for a second fire station and a new public library.



Hobart's first City Hall was on Fourth Street between Main Street and the lake. It was built by S.H. Henderson, elected the town's first mayor in 1921. The building, and the ones beyond it which housed the Police and Fire departments, were demolished to provide a parking area for the present City Hall, which was erected in 1966.

Dan photo



1967 - 1977

When the new library was built on Front Street in 1968, the Hobart Historical Society purchased the old library building, built in 1915, to preserve it and to house a museum.

By this time the city dump on Ridge Road was about filled and being covered and the City Council approved the Chamber of Commerce request for building space; the lake was declared unsafe for swimming; annexation of about 15 square miles of Ross Township was considered; and Robinson Lake Park was opened for swimmers.

Jerry Rowley's seven-place tandem bike officiated at the opening of the Bike Route; Pavel Farms was Indiana's largest breeder of Arabian horses; the 1971-72 Brickie Cagers were sectional champs for the first time in Hobart High School history; and the city's garbage was trucked to Wheeler.

Its faith and traditions unchanged by congressional resolutions, Hobart stubbornly insisted on observing November 11 as Armistice Day. The High School band, colour guards, the Sheriff's Posse on horseback and hundreds of candle and flag-bearing patriots honored the defenders of their country.

There were plans to enlarge the sewer plant; the first building began at the Southlake Mall; the Brickies were football Conference Champions nearly every year; and the Art

Theatre's showing of "The Last Tango in Paris" was protested.

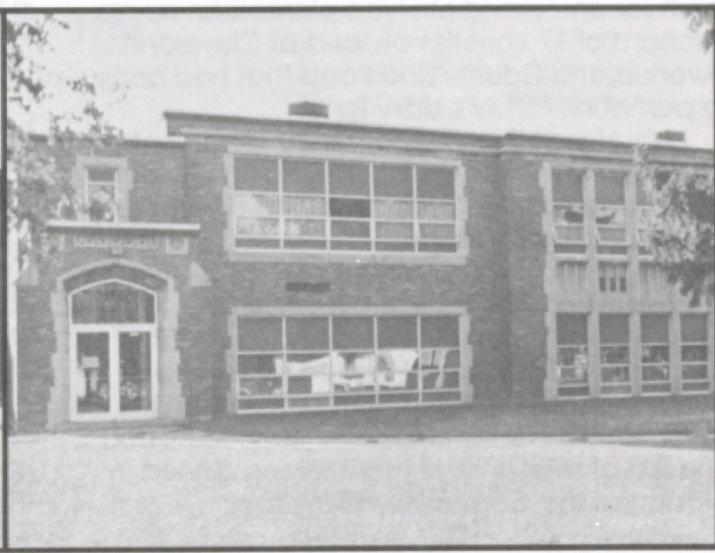
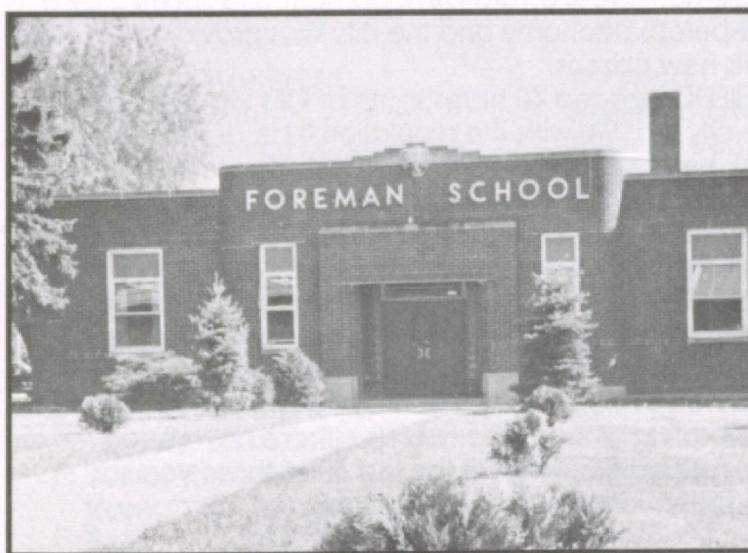
A biologist identified Lake George as a "future swamp;" the City Council adopted another "Master Plan;" Frances Greene was the first woman appointed to the Hobart Planning Commission and, in 1976, Calvin Green became Hobart's first Democratic mayor... and he would be re-elected in 1980 and 1984.

1977 - 1987

Construction of a new Wisconsin Street bridge took 22 months to complete; the Old Settlers Cemetery on South Lake Park Avenue was dedicated; High School students protested ROTC cancellation; a long winter freeze brought hundreds of dead fish to the lakeshore; and downtown merchants protested the loss of a beat policeman.

Halina Zielinski was Hobart's first "meter-maid;" funds for the operation of a "mudcat" to pump silt from the lake were included in the city budget; there was a declining school enrollment; and fire destroyed the Scout Cabin.

Jim McGee moved his health club to Hobart; census takers counted 22,385 persons in the city; the City purchased two ambulances; Brickie footballers continued to be Duneland and Regional champs; TV cable companies vied for Hobart business; and the sewer moratorium and high interest rates equalled no growth.



Foreman School, built on 10th Street in 1945 and named with affection for "Uncle Billy" Foreman, a school janitor, and Mundell School, built in 1923 on land on Wisconsin Street acquired from the Mundell family, were razed in 1994 when Joan Martin Elementary School was erected on the Foreman School site. The state-of-the-art facility provides the technology for computer-age education, but these old schools are well-remembered.



In 1981 the Major A Girls Softball Team was state champion for the second consecutive year; the Jaycees voted on admitting women; the city received Federal funds for widening 10th Street; and Leon's QEM Triathlon was inaugurated in 1983.

City Councilman Charles Sullivan headed a council study of the annexation of Ross Township; the Lake George swan hatched three cygnets; and the Chamber of Commerce City Improvement Committee was given permission for the construction of a bandshell.

1987 - 1997

In spite of an inconvenient rain, the dedication of the Revelli Bandshell was an inspiration; plans for development and improvements along the lake were presented to the City Council; and a grant was sought to help fund the project.

Petitions were circulated to put the issue of an elected school board to the voters; and Ross township annexation proceedings were begun.

Hobart City Clerk Margaret Kuchta was the first woman elected mayor. She took office in January of 1988. That year the "Nob Hill" area north of Highway 6 was annexed by the city; the sewer moratorium was lifted; stores, shops and businesses were being opened at a spectacular pace along the Highway 30 corridor and David McAfee planted an apple orchard of 17 varieties on land at Cleveland Avenue and County Line Road that had been a part of his family's dairy farm.

Hobart Industrial Economic Development Corporation in co-operation with the city and its park department designed and developed Festival Park with walkways, a fountain and a boat launch.

A new bridge was built over the Lake George dam with donations and the work of volunteers to honor Lou Kuchta, who died soon after his wife was elected mayor. The same year, Linda and George Buzinec hosted the first of their annual Thanksgiving dinners in Hobart at the Community Center.



Lake George is taking on a new look between Third Street and the dam. Workmen position forms for a seawall and a pier, elements of the city's bond-funded lakefront development project.

The Hobart Brickies football team, perennial conference and regional champs, won the Indiana State championship in 1987, a feat of faith, dedication and pride it repeated in 1989, 1991 and 1993.

Robert Malizzo began his term as Hobart's mayor in 1992. That same year the city renamed Lakeview Park Jerry Pavese Park in honor of the long-time councilman.

It was an era of annexation. Hobart's limits were substantially extended with the additions of two areas north of Highway 6 and four areas, including Ross Township, south of 61st Avenue. Business, multiple and single home real estate development was spurred by a prosperous economy and the city was providing services to its new citizens.

HIEDC deeded 40 acres south of Old Highway 30 to the city in 1994, with the stipulation it be developed as a park before February, 1996. It was dedicated as Veterans Memorial Park in May of that year.

Linda M. Buzinec, who had served for eight years on the City Council, was elected Hobart's mayor in 1996. Soon after, petitions seeking bonding for funding of the lakefront development and clean-up project were successful and work on the lake shore began.

As Hobart observes its 150th birthday it also is celebrating what so many of its citizens have been hoping and planning for the last 50 of those years ... the preservation of its precious lake.

COMMON COUNCIL



Members of the 1996-2000 Hobart City Council: (front row, from left) Ronald Blake, 1st District; Margaret Kuchta, 5th District; Donald Potrebic, At-Large; (back row) Thomas Campbell, 4th District; Matthew Claussen, At-Large; Carl Lindsey, 2nd District; Robert Paulson, 3rd District.

|N MEMORIAM

Dedicated July 4, 1984, a Doughboy Monument Plaque
Honors by Name Those of Hobart's Young Men
Killed in Combat during Wars in Korea and Vietnam

KOREA 1950 - 1953

Perry A. Anderson
Charles L. Bush
William Edward Crago

Raymond A. Decker
Robert L. Emery
Robert Lee Green
Leonard E. Hayworth

Donald Brinton Koenig
Paul George Leathurby
Vernon Bernard Rich

R.A. Backemeyer
Clifford C. Barnett
William D. Beeson
Wayne G. Bernoska
Thomas M. Blystone
Leroy J. Breitsprecher
Junior R. Burns
Ramon P. Cancel
Fred W. Carpenter
William B. Cawley, Jr.
Gary W. Chapman
R.H. Corley

Gary W. Cox
Larry D. Draves
Donald E. Erwin
Richard W. Ford
Thomas W. Johnson
John W. Lake
William G. Lute
Joel W. Mock
Stephen J. Mullet
James T. Ralph
Ralf I. Saunders
Gerald L. Schwuchow
R.L. Snyder

Charles H. Stanley
Gary L. Stevens
Kenneth A. Stonebaker
Bradley E. Suchka
Freddie L. Tapper
Hilbert W. Teeter
Tommy A. Waldon
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Hobart Historical Society

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City Improvement Committee

Virginia Curtis

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Development Corp.

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Hobart Library

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Fred Szarka

Mackey Studios

Rick Mackey

County Line Orchards

Bonnie McAfee

Ann Schmelter

Margaret Kuchta

Hazel Kellen

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1847 Hobart Centennial 1947 Souvenir Program

George Earle and Family

Hobart Historical Society

A Short History of Hobart

Mariam J. Pleak, H. Richard Harrigan, Walter A. Keller

The Hobart Gazette

The Times

The photograph of Lake George which creates the cover for this booklet is a scene familiar to all who live and work in the heart of Hobart. For the past 50 years hopes and plans, studies and bills to finance and accomplish the removal of a collection of a century of silt from the lake have come to naught.

Now, as the city is celebrating its Sesquicentennial, a viable plan and project is underway for the cleaning and restoration of the lake and enhancement of the lakefront.

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